

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0733

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 2527

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: MISIONES ELECTIONS

1. SUMMARY. MISIONES PROVINCE WILL HOLD ON APRIL 13 THE FIRST ELECTIONS SINCE PERON WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT IN 1973. WHILE MISIONES IS NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF ARGENTINA, IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NATION AS A WHOLE WILL INEVITABLY BE SEEN IN THE RESULTS. HONEST ELECTIONS ARE EXPECTED AND THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IS PROCEEDING NORMALLY WITHOUT GOA INTERFERENCE, ASIDE FROM AN ABUNDANCE OF "SUBSIDIES" BEING GIVEN OUT IN AN OBVIOUS ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE VOTERS. MOST OBSERVERS GIVE THE ORTHODOX PERONISTS A NARROW VICTORY WITH THE RADICAL PARTY SECOND. END SUMMARY.

2. THE FIRST ELECTION TO BE HELD IN ARGENTINA SINCE THE ONE THAT BROUGHT JUAN PERON BACK TO POWER IN 1973 WILL BE HELD IN MISIONES PROVINCE ON APRIL 13. WHILE EVERYONE IS AWARE THAT RURAL MISIONES IS NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF ARGENTINA AS A WHOLE, A GREAT DEAL OF EFFORT WILL BE EXPENDED TRYING TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESULTS. THE PROVINCE'S HOTELS ARE CURRENTLY FILLED TO CAPACITY WITH REPORTERS AND POLITICIANS FROM OUTSIDE WHO HAVE COME TO CAMPAIGN FOR THEIR PARTIES.

3. AT STAKE ARE THE GOVERNORSHIP, VICEGOVERNORSHIP AND 32 SEATS IN THE UNICAMERAL PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE. THE WINNERS

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OF THE FIRST TWO WILL BE DETERMINED JOINTLY BY A SIMPLE

MAJORITY OF THE VOTES. THE LEGISLATIVE POSTS ARE AWARDED ON THE BASIS OF THE PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTES EACH PARTY RECEIVES OF THE TOTAL. ABOUT 6000 OF THE EXPECTED 200,000 VOTES WILL BE NECESSARY FOR EACH SEAT.

4. HONEST ELECTIONS ARE EXPECTED. SO FAR THE CAMPAIGNING HAS BEEN INTENSE, BUT ORDERLY AND FREE FROM GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE. EVEN THE MONTONEROS, WHO HELD A RALLY FOR THE PARTIDO AUTENTICO WITH ABOUT 6000 PERSONS IN ATTENDANCE, HAVE HAD RELATIVE FREEDOM OF ACTION. BOTH THE ORTHODOX AND THE DISSIDENT LEFTIST PERONISTS (INCLUDING THE MONTONEROS) HAVE SPENT A GOOD DEAL OF MONEY ON THEIR CAMPAIGNS. NORMA KENNEDY, WHO HAS BEEN HANDING OUT "SUBSIDIES" BY THE HUNDREDS DURING RECENT WEEKS IN THE NAME OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL WELFARE, WAS QUOTED AS SAYING "WE ARE NOT BUYING VOTES, WE ARE AWAKING CONSCIENCES". DESPITE THE ATTEMPTED AUPHEMISM, THE DESIRED EFFECT OF THE HANDOUTS IS OBVIOUS AND HAS BEEN STRONGLY DENOUNCED BY THE RADICALS, AMONG OTHERS.

5. AT THIS POINT MOST OBSERVERS CONTINUE TO GIVE THE FREJULI A NARROW VICTORY IN THE GOVERNOR'S RACE WITH THE RADICALS SECOND AND THE JOINT TERCERA POSICION/PARTIDO AUTENTICO TICKET SOMEWHERE BEHIND. SINCE THERE IS ALMOST NO TICKET-SPLITTING THE SAME RESULT IS EXPECTED FOR THE LEGISLATIVE SEATS. THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BEING THAT TERCERA POSICION AND PARTIDO AUTENTICO ARE RUNNING SEPARATE SLATES. THIS WILL AT LEAST GIVE A CHANCE TO GAUGE THE STRENGTH OF THE LATTER. THE FREJULI WILL END UP WITH LESS THAN A MAJORITY OF THE LEGISLATURE.

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